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SCHOOL OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICE

THE SOCIAL PROGRESS OF THE NEGRO
WOMAN IN AMERICAN CIVILIZATION


A THESIS

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INTRODUCTION

Down through the ages women in all races have been the weather-vanes, the indicators, showing in which direction the wind of social progress blows. The currents of change have depended upon the development and status of womanhood. What then can be said of the Negro woman in American civilization, of her development and progress, which is of great import not only to her race but to the world? What are and have been her difficulties, her handicaps, her problems? How is she solving them?

In order to answer these questions, one must have in mind not any one Negro woman, but rather a pageant of individuals, each individual differently endowed.

The women in any race are the conservators of its moral stamina, which in turn lies back of all social progress. Anyone who gains an intimate knowledge of the better side of Negro life very likely will be impressed with what appears to be superiority of the progressive colored women over the average colored man of like opportunity.

Much has been said and written about the Negro man; almost nothing has been written about the Negro woman and her progress in American civilization. Her struggle toward purity and refinement involves as deep and as dark a tragedy as any that marks the history of human strivings. If any would gain a true knowledge of the inner soul of black folks, he should make a

study of their women and the conditions under which they have lived over a period of years.

THE WOMAN'S SILENCE

"Oh, lady, when a woman's life is passing in the night,
When woman's pleading lips are silent in agonized prayer,
When woman's life is passing in the night, and she is alone,
And all affection's heart is broken, and she is alone,
And all affection's heart is broken, and she is alone,
The victim of unnumbered wrongs, her suffering heart,
Or shall she pray? she prays for help, she prays for help,
Until the dawn that brings her aid, that brings her aid,
Until the dawn that brings her aid, that brings her aid."

—J. W. D. D.

DOMESTIC LIFE

"Oh, Lady, when a sister's cry is ringing on the air,
When woman's pleading eye is raised in agonized despair,
When woman's limbs are scourged and sold midst rude and
 brutal mirth,
And all affection's holiest ties are trampled to the earth,
May female hearts be still unstirred, and midst their
 wretched lot,
The victims of unmeasured wrongs, be carelessly forgot?
Or shall the prayer be poured for them, the tear be freely
 given,
Until the chains that bind them now, from every limb be
 riven?"

--E. M. Chandler

DOMESTIC SERVICE

The first picture of the Negro woman in American civilization is in the fettered chains of bondage. Since a race can rise no higher than its womanhood, the status of the American colored woman is one of the most important features in the whole history of slavery. What then did slavery mean to her? How did she react to it? What did she do to secure her freedom? Answers to these questions are found in the study of the social progress of the Negro woman in American civilization.

In the 18th century the Negro woman learned the English language, and her blood was mingled to a considerable extent with that of the master class. The house servants particularly were favored, in some cases receiving education. During this period also the number of free Negro women slowly increased.

One may easily become confused by the apparent inconsistencies of Southern slavery. On the one hand, one hears of the staid and gentle patriarchy, the wide and sleepy plantations with lord and retainers, ease and happiness; on the other hand one hears of barbarous cruelty and unbridled power, and wide oppression of men and women. Which is the true picture? Both are correct. They are not opposite sides of the same shield; they are different shields. They are pictures on the one hand of house service in the great country seats, and in the towns; and on the other hand of the field laborers who raised the great tobacco, rice and cotton crops.

"The vast majority of the slaves were employed in agriculture and domestic service. There was a

marked difference between those known as 'farm hands' and the 'house servants'! The position of the latter being regarded as higher and the work lighter, it was eagerly desired and sought. This difference was far more marked on large plantations in the South than on the small farms in the Middle States."¹

The Negro women slaves who labored on the farms worked side by side with the Negro men in the tobacco, rice, and cotton fields. The law with reference to these slaves on plantations imposed a penalty of \$5 dollars if they were made to work on Sunday or more than fifteen hours a day in summer and fourteen hours in winter. This was for the colonial period; the same general limits obtained in later years. Such skilled labor as the South possessed before the Civil War was mainly in the hands of Negro men, who might be blacksmiths, harnessmakers, carpenters or similar artisans. But at this time skilled labor for Negro women was unknown.

In addition to the daily work on the plantations the Negro woman had other duties to perform--preparing meals for her family and other Negro slaves working on the farms,--and also raising her own children.

The women of this race have been industrious, but it is only in late years that they have reaped the fruits of their own industry. The following word of praise from a recent writer in the Boston Transcript voices this truth as set forth in the present condition of the most humble of our women, laboring in the Southland. This writer in the closing lines

¹

Helm, Mary, The Upward Path, p.44

of an interesting article, The Southern Plantation of Today, gives this tribute of the Afro-American woman in this section of our fair land,

"Too much credit cannot be given these hard-working wives and mothers, who hoe, rake, cook, wash, chop, patch and mend from morning until night; very often the garments will be patched until scarcely a trace of original foundation material can be seen, and there are many cases where the wife is much the best 'cotton chopper' of the two and her work far more desirable than her husband's. The wife works as hard as her husband--harder in fact, because when her field work is over she cooks the simple meals, washes the clothes, and patches the garments for her numerous family by the blaze of a light-wood torch after the members of the household are rolled into their respective quilts and voyaging in slumberland. She does more than this for she raises chickens, and turkeys, sometimes geese and ducks, using the eggs for pocket-money."¹

As has already been stated, the work of the Negro woman in household service was pleasant and lighter than that of the "farm hands". But here she was often confronted with difficult problems in relation to her southern white owners. She was made to suffer continually sexual promiscuity by her master, and often became the victim of a helpless debasement from which there was no escape.

"The female slave upon whom her kidnapper has fixed his eyes full of adultery, and cannot cease from sin, is not only unable to deliver herself by flight, but she has no means of resistance. A white woman could assume an attitude of self-defense, and if she wounded, maimed or even killed her brutal assailant, the law would exculpate her, and she would be honored for her resistance; but she who has a colored skin dares not resist or attempt any opposition; and if through the impulse of desperation she should inflict a wound upon her ravisher, in the very attempt she would forfeit her mortal existence if the fact were presented to one of their execrable criminal courts, and if that course was not adopted, her whole future life would be the subject

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Boston Transcript, Editorial (Article), published 1894, The Southern Plantation of Today.

of her despot's unceasing and malicious revenge."¹

The occupations of the female slaves in household service consisted of cooks, waitresses, laundresses, personal and chamber-maids, and nurses, better known as "Mammies" to the slave owner's children and family in general. As to the Negro woman's efficiency in these occupations, it was an established fact that she labored with loyalty and faithfulness unexcelled by any people in similar servitude.

But the story of the Negro woman's worth is yet but imperfectly told. She was often regarded as an indispensable adjunct in many Southern homes. As an apt illustration of this,

"In a certain Southern home there were several children entrusted to the care of a Negro nurse, rather an elderly woman, though alert and active. Her control of this group in the sitting room and at the dining table seemed to be absolute, even though the parents were present. This is by no means an uncommon condition in the Southern home. It was observed that her management and discipline was perfect, as was shown by an occasional 'Ah'! attended by the pointing of the index finger of the old woman, in response to which the urchin would stop short his utterance or unseemly conduct. At one time, when the servant disappeared for a short while, the father found not stronger motive of appeal to one of the little boys than to say, 'Better mind, Mammy will get you'! For nine-tenths of the time the children were under control of that careful nurse. When at last the old woman disappeared with her group of dependents, the father remarked that the old servant was regarded as an indispensable adjunct of that home and that he could not see how her services could be dispensed with."²

The home of the Negro woman slave, though often very dear

1

Kapp, Isaac, Slavery Illustrated in its Effects Upon Woman and Domestic Society, p. 47.

2

Riley, B. F., The White Man's Burden, p. 107.

to her, of necessity lacked some of the essentials of a true home, yet from it and from her contact with the home life of her master and mistress, she formed an ideal, however dim, toward which she was to struggle when her circumstances changed.

From the crudest elements blended with poverty and ignorance, desire and hope, she began slowly to construct for herself certain standards of life by imitating the social characteristics of the other race. But unfortunately she was unable to distinguish between the good and bad examples she saw set before her, and though in some instances she chose the latter, in many cases she chose the better. In these, she learned by doing.

"There was a group of slaves on nearly every plantation, especially the larger ones who benefited appreciably from close contact with the master's household, acquiring the manners of the 'big house,' absorbing some of its culture, oftentimes receiving specific instruction in letters as well as crafts; who were at times permitted to apply to their own advantage whatever benefits they might gain from their superior abilities."¹

The development of her home life, however, was continually interrupted, and in many cases shattered by her being sold outright by her master or by her losing her mate by the same method. Often her children were separated from her by the slave owners. The home of the Negro woman as a self-protective independent unit did not exist. The quarters where the slaves lived consisted of rude, dilapidated cabins, containing "an apology for a bed, a chair or two, a frying pan and a pot-rack.

¹ Moton, Robert R., What the Negro Thinks, p. 20.

The walls were adorned with one or two gaudy pictures. No wardrobe was necessary as there was nothing to put in one."¹ It was not uncommon for several persons to live, eat and sleep in a one room cabin.

That marriage of the female slave was not considered binding or legal is indicated by the following quotation:

"The law recognized no marriage of slaves as legal. The slave owner need not hesitate concerning the legality of the separation of slave husband and wife. Except in Louisiana, no law existed to prevent this wrong."²

As for morals she was not supposed to have any. W. H. Thomas in The American Negro made the following statement in regard to the chastity of Negro women,

"The moral status of a race is fixed by the character of its women; but as moral rectitude is not a predominant trait in negro nature, female chastity is not one of its endowments. Nor has negro womankind any strong incentive for virtuous living....."³

But Thomas fails to prove the truth of his statement. Whatever chastity is lacking in Negro women is due not to any inherent nature, but to the social environment in which they have been forced to live. Proof of this is given in The Liberty Bell written by Friends of Freedom.

"When Frederic Dalcho brought his young bride from New Orleans, there were great demonstrations of joy among the slaves of the establishment.....The bride brought with her her slave Rosa, a young girl elegantly formed and beautiful as a velvet carnation. They had grown up from infancy together; for the mother of Rosa was foster-mother of Marion the bride, and as soon as the little white lady could speak, she learned to call her slave. As they grew older, the

¹ Brawley, B. G., A Short History of the American Negro, p. 53

² Fisher, S. J., A Study of the American Negro, p. 29.

³ Thomas, W. H., The American Negro, p. 197.

wealthy planter's daughter took pride in her servant's beauty, and loved to decorate her with jewels. 'You shall wear my golden ornaments whenever you ask for them', she said, 'they contrast so well with the soft brown satin of your neck..... Besides you are a handsome creature and gold is none too good for you.'

Her coachman, Mars, was of the same opinion....but Rosa paid small heed to his flattering words. Not so with George, the favorite slave of Frederic Dalcho, but the master and mistress were too much absorbed with their own honey-moon to observe them. Low talks among the rose bushes passed unnoticed. Thus it passed on for months. The young slaves had uttered the marriage vow to each other in the silent presence of the stars.

It chanced one day that Rosa was summoned to the parlor to attend her mistress while George stood respectfully, hat in hand, waiting for a note which his master was writing. She wore about her neck a small heart and cross of gold which her lover had given her the night before. He smiled archly as he glanced at it, and the answer from her large dark eyes was full of joyful tenderness. Unfortunately, the master looked up at that moment, and at once comprehended the significance of that beaming expression. He saw it spoke whole volumes of mutual happy love, and it kindled in him an unholy fire. He had never before realized that the girl was so handsome. He watched her, as she pursued her work, until she felt uneasy beneath his look. From time to time he glanced at his young wife. She, too, was certainly very lovely, but the rich mantling beauty of the slave had the charm of novelty. The next day he gave her a gay dress, and called her pretty darling. Poor Rosa hastened away, filled with terror. She wanted to tell her mistress all this, and claim her protection, but she dared not. As for George, he was of a proud and fiery nature, and she dreaded the storm it would raise in his breast. Her sleeping apartment adjoined that of her mistress, and she was now called to bring water to her master at a much later hour....Rosa wept much in secret, and became shy. Her mistress supposed it was because Mr. Dalcho objected to her marriage to George..... One night Marion was awakened by the closing of the door. She heard voices in Rosa's apartment and the painful truth flashed upon her....At breakfast Rosa

was in attendance, but George would not look at her, though she watched for a glance with anxious love. 'Where were you last night?' he asked, 'Oh, George,' she said with bitter anguish, 'what can I do? I am his slave!....."¹

Further proof of the real causes of the Negro woman's sex maladventures is seen in the following:

"A lawyer with a wife and several children was elected to the legislature of Virginia. Speedily after his arrival in Richmond to attend the House of Delegates, he went to the human flesh market and purchased a superior mulatto girl, expressly for the purposes of concubinage during his stay in Richmond. One of his first acts was to dislodge his wife and children from his own dwelling house, and to rent for them another habitation, while he transferred his 'likely Negro wench' to their abode. The first evening after the purchase, the legislator made known his design in buying her that she might be his concubine during his sojourn in Richmond, after which she should go with him into the country. She refused compliance, and resisted his attempts to force her, because he could not easily execute his base scheme in the tavern where he resided, dreading the noise she would make....he pretended to put her out to board. As soon as she was secure in one of those dark and secret dens of pollution which are so numerous in Richmond, he appeared, made known to her the helpless situation in which she was immured, and repeated his demands.

Finding all other means ineffectual, with the aid of monsters to whose guard he had committed her, he scourged her most unmercifully until through conjoined agony and terror she was obliged to yield. Then she was removed to the tavern as his domestic servant, and thence proceeded with him to his residence. In the character of his avowed companion, within sight of his family, he associated for years with that colored woman....Finally at the door of his own house he sold her and several children which she had borne to him."²

To the Negro woman in bonds, the institution of slavery was one long night with little hope of day. Her highest

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Friends of Freedom, The Liberty Bell, p. 147.

²

Knapp, Isaac, Slavery and Its Effects Upon Woman and Domestic Society, p. 47 ff.

impulses, her tenderest emotions, her very incentive to high endeavor, felt the blasting effects of the system. She might work in the field or in the household service from sunrise to sunset; but none of the fruit of her labor was her own. She might cherish the tenderest sentiments of a mother, only to see her child torn from her arms forever. She might possess lofty ambition or distinctive genius and find effort to deprive her of every quality of womanhood. With her sisters she sang in the night-time her wild "sorrow song", "I've been a-listenin' all the night long"; and in yearning for the joys of heaven, she prayed for deliverance from physical bondage.

It is sometimes claimed that slavery was a blessing in disguise, for the Negro woman came into the possession of the dominant language of the glove, was later taught the arts of industry, and was made a sharer in the benefits of the most splendid civilization the world has ever known. There is much plausible glamor in all this, but is there as much in it for the Negro woman as is ordinarily assumed? Of what use were all these if they could not be employed for her benefit? There is much evidence that whatever benefit she received was merely incidental. If the character of the female slave was not benefited, was there any genuine benefit at all? As Mark Hopkins says,

"Man may have strength of character only as he is capable of controlling his faculties; of choosing a rational end; and in its pursuit of holding fast to his integrity against all the might of external nature."¹

1

Hopkins, President Mark, quoted, p. 67.

Apply this principle to the Negro woman in slavery and what becomes of the much-boasted benefit of which we hear so much? The simple fact of slavery itself neutralized all the so-called benefit. The fact is well known that the animalism of the white owner and others was not conducive to the highest ideals of character and of life. At its best slavery was degrading and brutalizing. The incidental advantages came far short of atoning for that of which the Negro slave woman was the compelled recipient. Entering on life for herself she had but little to take with her in her untried sphere. For the incidental advantages for which so much is claimed, she is indebted more to providence than to man. These slight advantages happened to be inseparable for the degradation to which she was subjected. The motive of the slave owner was that of making the greatest number of dollars out of slavish labor and not that of benefiting the Negro woman morally or otherwise.

"About the year 1700 able-bodied adult Negroes were valued at from \$125.00 to \$200, and children at \$50.00 or \$60.00. There was little difference in the value of men and women, for while a man might do more work, a woman might beget more children for her master..... after the invention of the cotton-gin the price of slaves rose so that a man who in 1792 brought \$300 sold in 1800 for \$450. The price continued to rise until in the middle of the 19th century that for an able bodied man or a beautiful woman was very frequently \$1200 and under exceptional circumstances, even \$1800."¹

¹
Brawley, B. G., A Short History of The American Negro, p. 50.

ECONOMIC AND INDUSTRIAL INTERESTS

The problem of an independent livelihood seems most vitally on the welfare of the Negro woman. The perpetuation of her racial stock depends upon her capacity to earn her daily bread. In the last analysis the Negro woman's progress at every point must hinge upon her economic well-being, and she cannot move forward in other directions except upon a sound economic basis. What then is the present industrial level of the Negro woman in American civilization as compared with that of the white woman? In view of the fact that Negro women are to be found occupying a lower plane than women of any other race, what are the essential factors which account therefor? On the one hand we must not forget the influence of the factor of inherent deficiencies in the Negro woman herself, and on the other hand we must not forget the influence of the economic conditions of her race. Without a doubt, the great mass of Negro women are engaged in the casual and lowest form of labor. The Negro woman's present economic standing relative to that of the white woman appears most plainly when a comparison is drawn between the proportion of the members of each race who are found to be engaged in this same type of work of the lowest grade. The proportion of Negro males engaged in this same type of work of the lowest grade was five times larger and that of Negro females was one-half times larger than the proportion of white males and females respectively.

To further explain this condition of economic depression John Daniels, in Freedom's Struggle makes a comparison between

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To further explain this condition of economic depression John Daniels, In Freedom's Birthplace makes a comparison between

the total proportions of each race reported to use the technical phrase, "gainfully employed"--or in plain terms at work for pay.

"In the case of the white population this proportion was 65% for men and boys, and 24% for women and girls; while among the Negroes the corresponding proportions were respectively 76% and 40%. That is, the proportion of men and boys at work was greater by 11% and that of women and girls by 16% in the Negroes' case. These percentages show that colored people are subjected to a more severe degree of economic pressure than the white race. In regard to the employment of women and girls this percentage is 'even higher' (40% as compared with 29%) than among the city's foreign immigrants. That such is the fact bears witness not only to a larger proportion of unmarried working women but also to the excessive proportion of wives, mothers, and daughters in Negro homes, who by the rigor of demand for family support are forced into labor beyond their own domestic responsibilities."¹

Mr. Daniels further explains,

"In the case of the white population, the great majority of the men who are not at work are either living on their incomes or tiding along on saving until employment is again obtained. But with the Negro voluntary or enforced idleness of men has to be offset by the labor of the women. The mass of this race, are at present on an economic plane so low that the struggle for livelihood must be kept up incessantly."²

In the days of slavery the great mass of Negroes in the South were agricultural laborers, while the remainder were either artisans or domestic servants. Nearly all were specialized and in a greater or less degree skilled in their various occupations. But with the breaking down of this old order of things together with the abolition of slavery and the ravages of war, a large number of the race were thrown out of

¹ Daniels, John, In Freedom's Birthplace, p. 312

² Ibid, p. 313

their customary employment. And Negro men and women migrated from rural to urban districts. Negro women upon entering industry were handicapped by race and sex in industrial employment. In 1930 the Women's Bureau cooperating with the Division of Negro Economics of the Department of Labor made an investigation in seventeen localities of nine states to gather urgently needed data regarding these newcomers to industry. They found 11,812 Negro women in 150 selected plants or about 16.8 percent of all workers. In these prevailing occupations--textiles, paper products, tobacco products, candy, glass and clothing--Negro women were first employed only because white men and girls were temporarily not available. One third of these Negro women were working ten or more hours a day, and most of them were on the less skilled processes of the work, and in some instances, notably tobacco or glass, the unfavorable surroundings were so serious as to prompt severe comment from the department investigators. Occupations of white and Negro women in tobacco, glass and textiles were entirely different and largely so in leather and food products. It was discovered that only 39 firms gave Negro women the same work and equal opportunities with white women workers, and seven of these made discriminations in their pay envelopes. In 1928 Miss Mary Anderson, the Director for the Women's Bureau, undertook to compile for the National Interracial Conference, studies of Negro women in industry in 15 states.

"The 15 states studied included 17,134 Negro women in 682 establishments. Of this number 4,850 in 370

plants were not tabulated, since the interest of the present study centers in the Negro women in the newer industrial pursuits, while those excluded were known to be engaged in occupations that have been considered customary for women, such as sweeping and cleaning or they were in laundries, hotels, or restaurants. Of the number remaining 12,123 were in 251 manufacturing plants and 161 were in 61 general mercantile establishments. It is probable that not quite all of the women in the more traditional types of work have been excluded, since some whose occupations were not reported are likely to have been sweepers or cleaners, or may also have been some whose departments were reported but whose exact occupations were not specified; but if the duties of these few were not specified; but if the duties of these few were not especially unusual, at least the scene of their labors has been shifted into the manufacturing world. Most of those in stores were maids, as were also a very few in certain miscellaneous industries. The 12,123 in manufacturing for whom reports were obtained constitute a fair sample--11.5 per cent of the 104,983 Negro women that the 1930 census records in manufacturing and mechanical industries, and, if exact occupations could be analyzed, the census numbers would include some of the sweepers and cleaners who have been omitted from the Women's Bureau Study."¹

Charles S. Johnson, The Negro in American Civilization, states in regard to Negro women in industry, page 64,

"The largest number of Negro women were found in tobacco, laundries, textiles, and food products and the Southern states employing great numbers weree Missouri, Georgia, Tennessee, and Kentucky."²

An outstanding feature is the striking discrepancy in wages between whites and Negroes. The occupations with the highest median were: sausage makers, \$22.35; oyster shuckers, \$11.50; tobacco feeders, \$14.00; tobacco twister, \$12.60. The lowest median weekly earners were: chicken pickers \$7.75; clothing machine operators, \$3.80; tobacco bunchers, \$1.85; boxers and craters, \$3.75. In Georgia 88.9 per cent of the

1

Johnson, Charles S., The Negro in American Civilization, p. 63.

2

Ibid, p. 64.

Negro women and 20.9 per cent of the white women earned less than \$10.00 a week; 35 per cent of the Negro women and 10.02 per cent of the white women earned less than \$5.00 a week.

As though working all day was not enough, many employers have given Negro women work that can be done at home; for this solves the problem of room space as well as racial contacts in the industry. It has been pointed out that this arrangement is preferred by these women because it does not seriously disturb the household duties and care of their children.

Myra Colson, The Negro Home Workers in Chicago, made a study of 100 of these workers in Chicago. She stated that most of these women were migrants from the South; that the length of residence of these women in Chicago extended from six months to twenty-eight years, more than two-thirds having lived in the city five years or more; that the ages of these women were from twenty to thirty-five with relatively few extremely young or old workers in the group; that they had been formerly employed in unskilled and semi-skilled occupations; that they presented favorable employment record from the point of view of length of time with their present employer; and that these interviewed had considerable experience at home work.¹

The wages of these women varied from 9 cents to \$2.00 per hour which certainly shows a lack of organization of this type of work; and apparently there is neither a uniform rate of

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Johnson, Charles S., The Negro in American Civilization, p. 55.

payment nor an attempt to pay according to the amount of time required to do the work. In addition to this, the work was seasonal, subject to capricious reductions in rates and extremely long hours to make it pay.

The vast majority of colored women gainfully employed in northern cities are still in the field of domestic and personal service just as they have been in previous decades. Before 1915, however, the number of colored women employed in northern industries was so small as to be practically negligible; the number of colored women in the field of domestic and personal service was almost four-fifths. Since that date, they have occupied such positions as the unskilled processes connected with garment trades, paper box factories, and meat packing houses, and to some extent, in clerical occupations connected with mail-order houses.

TABLE 14--Percentage of Colored Females Gainfully Employed¹
By Two Occupational Classes for Certain
Cities 1920 and 1910

CITY	Percentage of Females (Colored) Gainfully Employed in Manufacturing and Mechanical Industries		Domestic and Personal Service	
	1920	1910	1920	1910
New York.....	22.6	9.2	71.5	86.0
Philadelphia.....	11.5	5.7	84.0	89.9
Chicago.....	21.5	11.2	63.8	78.4
Detroit.....	12.3	7.7	79.1	78.0
Pittsburgh.....	6.7	6.0	87.3	88.3
Cleveland.....	14.1	10.0	77.8	81.1
Cincinnati.....	12.0	7.3	83.2	86.6

¹ Kennedy Louis V., The Negro Peasant Turns Cityward, p.91

Negro women as a class are in the most poorly paid and in the least desirable type of work. Even those who have completed high school or business training courses find it difficult to obtain work other than servants, waitresses, and elevator tenders. Because of these unfair conditions, with low wages and little chance for advancement and improvement in the economic and industrial field, Negro women often become prostitutes or floating domestics. Moreover, because of a labor shortage at the time of the war, Negro women were hired by northern employers. Apparently, then, industrial openings for women are not yet firmly established; hence further studies are needed before we can know whether Negro women are being retained in or further drawn into northern industries during periods of retrenchment when workers other than Negro women are at hand.

The Negro Peasant Turns Cityward--Louis V. Kennedy, p.81,

"The various investigations which have been made of the employment of Negro women in northern cities are not sufficiently comprehensive and comparative to justify more than a tentative conclusion as to their present status in industry. Yet these surveys indicate that there has been a real increase during recent years in the industrial openings for Negro women, since they have become a more important factor in meat packing, in the tobacco industry, in power laundries, in textile and garment factories, in munition plants, and in clerical positions. In various cities there has been a tendency for the proportion of colored females in domestic service to diminish while there was an increase in the proportion listed under manufacturing and mechanical industries."¹

Another problem which is for the most part an economic one is the surplus of Negro women. It is easier to account for

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Kennedy, Louise V., The Negro Peasant Turns Cityward, p.91

this unfortunate condition than it is to propose a remedy. Yearly there is an influx of Negro women to the cities because in the country there is little demand for such services as they can render. Many Negro girls when they are of age, and become conscious of their great deprivations, are enticed by the glare and glitter of city life.

"The advance in Negro domestic workers in the south may be partly ascribed to the tendency of thousands of young Negro men and women to leave the rural districts for the better wages and attractions of the towns. These people were perhaps as much attracted by the allurements of town life as they were anxious to escape the severe work on the farm. These migrants first went to the smaller towns. There they tended to displace the original workers, who in time were forced to move on to the large cities or migrate to the north."¹

Giving specific instances of this, an investigator remarks,

"Covington is forty-one miles southeast of Atlanta. Being the principal town, it carries on an extensive trade, especially on Saturdays with the people of Newton, Jasper and Morgan Counties. On such days the main square.....is filled with country folk, white and black, in all kinds of conveyances from the carry-all to the ox-cart. 'Here', according to the writer, 'they spend their money, make debts, eat, talk and are happy.' Tasting thus the larger life of the town, large numbers of country people are being constantly tempted to leave their farms and move to the towns. At the same time Covington boys and girls are rushing on to Macon and Atlanta."²

Thus in Montgomery, Alabama, and New Orleans, Louisiana, Negro farm-hands, men and women, went westward to California and the oil fields of Texas, seeking the advantages of higher wages and a better chance to see the world.

1

Greene and Woodson, The Negro Wage Earner, p.78.

2

Greene and Woodson, The Negro Wage Earner, p.78.

"The migration of Negroes to the towns affected especially Negro girls and women who were brought in large numbers from the country to serve in domestic capacities. This increasing number of girls seeking employment as servants in the towns also gave rise to a grave social problem. The girls were forced to sleep outside the homes where they worked during the day, which suggested them to many temptations, especially when they went North."¹

Commenting upon this, a speaker before the Hampton Negro Conference in 1904 said that the importation of Southern girls into Northern cities, how the girls obtain places, what becomes of them, and where their ambitions end after the glamor of the new life wears away, were some of the most serious problems which confronted the student of the Negro servant problem.

"In almost all Northern cities there were intelligence offices which supplied girls for house servants, sometimes importing them, sometimes merely meeting the strange girls as they land in Northern cities and forcing them into a virtual slavery. Inquiries as to the proportion of girls who had places engaged for them revealed the fact that practically all who left New Orleans were so provided for, while in Wilmington, Delaware, the girl or woman from the South who had not a place engaged for her by her friends before arriving was rare. But those two cities were exceptions. From other quarters came the dreary tale of inexperienced girls in the clutches of agents and immoral intelligence offices. Southern girls were usually preferred to Northern girls by club houses and employers of doubtful reputation and immoral proclivities; and because of their very inexperience they were frequently taken without references and even without questioning."²

While the Negro man finds it hard to obtain a fixed industrial status in the cities, the Negro woman finds an unlimited field of employment in the domestic and household

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¹ Ibid, p. 79

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² U.S. Dept. of Labor, Negroes of Sandy Springs, Maryland, Bulletin No. 32, p. 76.

industries. This surplus of women rarely if ever migrate back to the rural districts in quest of work.

A fact which cannot be overlooked in this study is the ambition and aspiration of colored women which is the most encouraging aspect of Negro life. Since they seek employment in domestic service, Kelly Miller, Race Adjustment, gives the results of a study of the occupations of colored women in the city of Washington which throws much light upon this subject:

Occupations of Colored Females in the District
of Columbia 1900¹

All occupations.....	23,448
Domestic & Personal service.....	21,018
Dressmaking and needlework.....	1,617
Professional service.....	519
All other occupations.....	294

Mr. Miller further states that there are 10,000 surplus women of color in the National Capital, and explains that this fact together with the low economic status of men renders it imperative that a large proportion of the women should enter the great bread-winning contest. He further explains,

"Seven-eighths of them are engaged in domestic and personal service. The 519 assigned to professional service are mainly engaged in teaching. These figures show us plainly the field in which these women must labor for all time that we have the data to foresee. If we take the country at large it will be found that the Negro woman is confined almost exclusively to agricultural and domestic pursuits as a means of gaining a livelihood."²

¹ Kelley, Miller, Race Adjustment, p. 173

² Ibid, p. 173

Colored Females Employed in the United
States, 1900¹

All occupations.....	1,316,872
Domestic and personal service.....	681,947
Agriculture.....	582,001
Professional service.....	15,601
All other occupations.....	37,323

The study of the occupation of Negro females, like that for males, is made difficult by the incomparability of some of the data for 1910 with those for 1920. As occupations of Negro females are more limited in range and have fewer numbers, less study is required.

After the elimination of agricultural pursuits the Negro females were found concentrated in comparatively few occupations. Four types of occupations dominate the list--servants, laundresses (not in laundry), dressmakers, and seamstresses (not in factory), and school teachers. The extent to which these workers had failed to enter modern industry to as great a degree as the males is indicated by the fact that in 1910, 87.0 per cent of the total number of non-agricultural workers were found in those four occupations.

The decade 1910-20 witnessed a decrease in three of these pursuits. The smallest numerical decline was for dressmakers, and the largest was for laundresses. The rate of change was highest for dressmakers. The following table shows the percentage of decrease.

¹

Ibid, p. 173

Decreasing Significant Occupations
of Negro Females

Occupations	1920	1910	Decrease	
			Number	Percent
Dressmakers and seamstresses (not in factories).....	26,961	38,148	11,187	29.3
Laundresses (not in laundries)...	283,557	361,551	77,994	21.6
Mid-wives and nurses (not trained).....	13,888	19,508	5,620	28.8
Musicians and teachers of music..	2,150	2,347	197	8.4
Servants.....	401,381	415,416	14,035	3.4

The character of the declining occupations makes it evident that Negro women were moving out of service and hand-labor types of occupations. There was consequently an actual decrease in the number of Negro females engaged in non-agricultural occupations from 1910 to 1920.

Just as the decrease in occupations of servants, laundresses, and dressmakers index the type of occupation out of which Negro women are moving, so the pursuits that show increases indicate the nature of the fields into which they are advancing. The following table shows the moderate increases in occupations of Negro women.

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Dutcher, Dean, The Negro in Modern Industrial Society, p. 62
Sources: Negro Populations in the United States 1790-1915
p. 523, table 19, Fourteenth census, Vol. IV, p. 432,
table 5.

Moderate Increases in Occupations
of Negro Females ¹

Occupations	1920	1910	Increase	
			Number	Percent
Charwomen and cleaners.....	7,183	7,026	157	2.2
Dealers (retail).....	3,136	2,994	142	4.7
Housekeepers and stewardesses....	13,250	10,021	3,229	32.2
Keepers of boarding and lodging houses.....	9,536	9,183	353	3.8
Keepers of restaurants, cafes and lunchrooms.....	3,455	2,734	721	26.4
Laborers (building, general and not specified).....	6,968	6,163	805	13.1
Nurses (trained).....	3,199	2,158	1,041	48.2
Operatives:				
Cigar and tobacco factories...	12,446	8,267	5,179	62.6
Laundries.....	19,115	12,196	6,919	56.7
Saleswomen.....	2,266	1,395	961	73.6
Teachers (school).....	29,189	22,441	6,748	30.1
Waitresses.....	14,155	7,434	6,721	90.4

Very different in character is the increase in the number of Negro hairdressers and manicurists. Although this is one of the older employments for Negro females, since there were approximately 4,000 such workers engaged in it in 1910, yet there was an unusually high rate of increase. There is a possibility that a large proportion of the increase was due to the greater prosperity of Negroes with a resulting increase in patronage of barber shops and beauty parlors. These increases took place principally in the larger cities.

¹

Dutcher, Dean, The Negro in Modern Industrial Society, p. 64.
Sources: Negro population in the United States 1790-1915
table 19, Fourteenth census, Vol. IV, p. 342, table 5

Striking Advances in Occupations of Negro Females ¹

Occupations	1920	1910	Increase	
			Number	Percent
Barbers, hairdressers and manicurists.....	12,660	3,782	8,878	234.7
Clerks (except in stores).....	3,432	953	2,470	259.2
Clerks (in stores).....	2,334	915	1,419	155.1
Elevator tenders.....	3,073	2	3,071	(2)
Janitresses and sextons.....	5,448	2,452	2,996	122.2
Laborers:				
Cigar and tobacco factories..	8,383	2,405	5,978	248.6
Cotton mills.....	2,634	407	2,227	547.2
Food industries.....	3,092	820	2,272	277.1
Lumber and furniture industries.....	3,122	939	2,183	232.5
Other factories.....	5,254	1,105	4,149	375.5
Steam railroads.....	2,058	808	1,250	154.7
Operative:				
Clothing industries.....	7,623	521	7,102	1,363.1
Food Industries.....	4,632	1,412	3,200	228.0

Dean Dutcher, Negro Problems in Cities, explains that these startling increases were probably due to the development of textile and lumbering industries and cotton mills in the South; that the increase in laborer (steam railroad) was an instance of the greater employment of females generally in these occupations. He attributes the larger number of Negro saleswomen and clerks in stores to the increase of the number of stores, for Negro customers, conducted by whites, as well as by Negroes. The increase of elevator tenders was probably the most

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Dutcher, Dean, The Negro in Modern Industrial Society, p. 66.
 Sources: Negro Population in the U. S. 1790-1915, p. 253.
 table 19, Fourteenth census, Vol. IV, p. 342, table 5.

striking illustration of a new occupation for these workers. In 1910 only two Negro females were enumerated as thus engaged, but by the Census of 1920, the number had increased to 3,073. It is possible, of course, that the utilization of Negro women in this capacity was a war-time emergency, as other censuses have pointed out, but general observation indicated a decided permanent increase. An occupation which is only a little less striking than the one just considered is that of operatives in suit, coat and overall factories, 233 in 1910, and 2,130 in 1920, an increase of 814.2 per cent.

Another fact which cannot be overlooked is the industrial and educational unpreparedness of the Negro woman. This unfitness goes deeper than a lack of training. It is due partly to inherent traits of nature, and partly to a deficiency in some of the qualities which are essential to the satisfaction of even a common labor position; and in nearly all the qualities which are dispensable for advancement into the higher grades. That such is the fact will appear more clearly in the light of further specification.

A vast number of Negro women are characterized by an easy going manner of life which borders closely to indolence. Fortunately, that is not true of the majority of Negro women, who when given opportunities in the industrial and economic field, surpass the Negro men in ambition, reliability, and stability. It is regarded as a common thing for many Negro men to give up good positions because they find the hours too exacting or the routine too dull to suit them. After earning

money to tide them along for a while, many of them stop working to return only when their money is gone. But not so with the Negro woman, and especially the Negro woman in the north. In many cases, she is the sole support of the family in spite of the monotonous and long-continued hours of labor.

".....the Negro man in many instances had to depend for his support upon the earnings of his wife or daughter who either did days work or 'went into service' or washed and ironed. Thus M. H. Lee who made a study of the Negroes of Carlisle, Pennsylvania, in 1896, said, 'The dependent male receives five percent of his support from the direct charity of the whites, ninety-five percent is furnished by the colored female. Seventy per cent of the colored females exclusive of school children and children under school age are in service, twenty per cent do washing at their homes. The women earn from \$1.50 to \$2.50 with an average of \$2.00 per week. If the woman of the family is in service the need of the family is paramount to all other considerations. No provisions arriving at the place of her employment fail to pay her toll, and wash bundles and dress fronts alike furnish her means of conveying food home.'"¹

The author further states,

"In the Middle West, Negro women also engaged in washing and ironing to help out the family budget. In 1903, 87 persons in Xenia, Ohio, were reported earning by this means from 75 cents to five dollars a week. They charged 25 cents a week of a dollar a month for washing the clothes of a single person and from 50 cents to \$1.50 a week for family washings. This class which is composed of women, on the whole, works more regularly than the man who are common laborers, and often it happens that the only income which a family may have for several weeks is that which results from the labor of the wife or some female member of the family."²

¹ Greene and Woodson, The Negro Wage Earner, p. 84

² Ibid, p. 84

Many Negro women as well as men today regard hard manual labor as servile and degrading in spite of better wages and prospects of advancement; they prefer employment which, though really inferior, enables them to put on an appearance of gentility and circumstance. This is in fact one of the reasons why comparatively few of the race are found among the common laborers who perform the heavy dirty tasks in manufacturing and other phases of the economic and industrial field. Many Negro women are unreliable in so far as no dependence can be placed upon their statements. They are also wanting in point of thoroughness, pertinacity, and providence. A few are inclined to be content with doing just enough to meet superficial and immediate requirements. The painstakingness and exactness which does not permit one to rest content until she has done the work before her as well as it can be done are rarer among the Negro women than they are among the white women of even incomparable industrial strata. Many Negro women also become discouraged more easily when they encounter obstacles in their work, or when it does not bring them higher wages and advancement as quickly as they wish; they are lacking in the strength of purpose which would enable them to stick to their tasks until they have accomplished the desired results by sheer determination. Not only many Negro men but many Negro women do not take the future sufficiently into account, and constantly exhaust their resources, failing to provide a surplus to assist them in bettering their economic conditions.

Another deficiency of the Negro woman's make-up is the lack of independence and initiative, which shows itself in the failure of a great majority to seek occupation outside and above the beaten path. Because of the fact that the mass of the Negro women have always been in the menial and low grade labor, most are want to assume that they can obtain only employment of that character. At their tasks, however, they seldom display the quality of originality (which is rare among any class) but wherever found is sure to carry its possessor forward. These incapacities also keep the Negro woman from striking out more largely for herself along professional and business lines, while her deficient ability for cooperation is an additional obstacle to the organization of companies, and to the undertaking of any other kind of industrial or commercial combination.

In addition to the industrial unfitness of the Negro woman herself is the fact which accounts for her economic backwardness, namely, discrimination against her on the part of the whites. To put one's finger upon the point in the industrial scale above which Negro women are barred is indeed difficult, for as has already been pointed out not only Negro women but Negro men are found in every industrial gradation from common laborer to substantial business and professional proprietorship. Nor can it even be said of those occupations of the various grades which are accessible to Negroes are few in number, for as has also appeared, Negro men and women are likewise to be found in the great majority of all the occupations which the census enumerates.

Nevertheless, the discrimination in question is very real and its effects are very plain. It shows itself first in a prejudice against Negro women applicants for employment. Except in the case of menial occupations in which Negro women are most numerous engaged, it is much harder to get employment than it is for the white woman. And especially is it difficult for the Negro woman to obtain work even in the case of menial occupations, if the particular employer to whom she applies has not been accustomed to employing Negroes. As a rule this prejudice increases as the grade of work ascends. In order to gain promotion, she must as a rule do work which is not only equal in quality to that of white employees of the same sort, but better. Even so, her promotion at best is slow and uncertain. The prospect of advancement diminishes as the grade of work ascends, and after a certain point sinks to zero. This discrimination operates in several forms of employment from which Negroes are practically excluded--such occupations as salesmen and saleswomen in department stores. This statement is particularly applicable to the northern Negro women. In the north white employees and white patrons would object to Negro salesmen and Negro saleswomen. In smaller stores and shops in Boston, Massachusetts, for example, there are a few Negro salesmen and Negro saleswomen. But one fact which can not be overlooked against this assertion is that white employees are not organized into unions through which they could voice any such collective protest effectively; that in the

absence of union organization and in view of the abundant outside labor of this sort upon which the stores may draw, they would not be likely to carry their resistance so far as to lose their positions.

In recent years, however, Negro women have lost ground in some of the menial occupations where their hold has supposedly been strongest. In this respect they have suffered especially from competition on the part of some of the immigrant groups of Southern Europe and elsewhere. In domestic service, now, Negro girls are usually a second choice to those of Swedish, German and other nationalities. Many Negro women themselves say that this loss is due to the increase of prejudice. However, the basic reason is that even in such menial occupations Negro women have been found wanting when weighed in the scale with other races.

If by some miracle the present industrial prejudice against them could be made to disappear over night, no doubt the immediate effect would be that the latter would suddenly rise many degrees in the industrial scale. But they would not retain their higher position long, for as their actual industrial unfitness made itself evident anew, discrimination based on this unfitness would again come into being, would operate as it operates today, and soon the mass of this race would drop back--not, it is true, to the same point as previously, for the temporary absence of prejudice would have enabled many to demonstrate individual ability, while fuller

opportunity would have enhanced the capacity of many more-- but certainly to a point not so very far above that which they had occupied before.

But while on one hand the Negro woman's unfitness is the underlying reason for the discrimination against her, it is true, on the other hand, that this very discrimination itself operates to perpetuate her unfitness by limiting her industrial opportunities. If she is practically barred from certain occupations, confronted with great difficulty in entering others, and in general relegated to those of inferior grade, the result must inevitably be that her prospects for eliciting and cultivating any latent industrial capacity she may possess are minimized. She is thus caught within an entangled mesh of cause and effect, finding through her own shortcomings, in the last analysis, an adverse discriminatory force from without, which seems to keep her from rising above her present inferior place in the industrial scale, or to push her still further down. Such is the curx of the economic problem with which the Negro woman is today face to face.

What are the facts which here align themselves when one attempts to discover whether or not the problem which has been pointed out is in process of solution from an economic standpoint?

A comparison of the conditions of today with those of the past, as the latter have already indicated, will show whether on the whole the general movement which has taken place in this

regard has been of a backward or forward trend. During slavery the Negro woman had no independent industrial status whatever. But the abolition of slavery by 1780 marked the starting point of the semi-independent economic history of this element of the population. The status of the slave woman, however, was succeeded by that of traditional servant. Then the full economic liberty and responsibility of the Negro people began. Though even before that a few Negro women had entered the professions and had become proprietors in a small way, yet, as between this handful at the top and the rank and file still engaged in menial work at the bottom, the proportion who had made their way into manual and clerical intermediate occupations remained slight for fifteen or twenty years following the war. But slight though it was, it was an advance in the industrial scale.

A second form of evidence of the Negro woman's economic progress is afforded by the increase in the number and variety of occupations chosen. In view of the latest census to which reference has been made of the numbers of Negro women listed in each of the three general classifications--agricultural, domestic and personal service, and professions--it is evident that the industrial distribution of the colored woman is wider and more varied today than it was ever before.

"In 1900 the census reports 1,316,840 Negro females engaged in gainful occupations. Of girls between ten and fifteen nearly one-third are at work, between sixteen and twenty-four nearly one-half, between twenty-five and sixty-four about two out of every five. These

figures show clearly that in the case of Negro women marriage does not withdraw them from the field of gainful occupations to anything like the extent that it does white women....A good part of the class between twenty-five and sixty-four must have been married, as 68.3% of all Negro women between those ages were reported as married."¹

CHAPTER THREE

THE PROPOSITIONS

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Helm, Mary, The Upward Path, p. 123

Has the Negro woman made any contribution to the general culture of humanity? Has she any higher possibilities besides that of manual work? Her life has been characterized by the habitual attitude of the American mind toward her higher strivings. The faintest suggestions of her higher possibilities have formerly been received either with a sneer or a smile. But despite traditional theories and contributions of racial usage there have been more or less occasional outcroppings of the Negro woman's suppressed and stunted rank.

Since a large number of Negro women are listed in the highest professions,--that of home-building, it is essential first to note her progress in this occupation and her part in a hard struggle in building the home. During the hardships of slavery "quarters" were the name for the place where Negro families resided, but for this term has been substituted the word "home". It has been estimated that a larger percentage of Negroes own their own homes today than of any other element in the American population. Such a possession is an object of pride, and with it has gone the desire to improve not only physical conditions, but also the atmosphere and influence.

Along with modern conveniences and tasteful furnishings the thinking Negro provides for his family the satisfactions of home life that intelligence and culture demand everywhere. Books, paintings, sculpture, music, newspapers, magazines, all are part of the life of these people. There is the annual vacation for all the family, sometimes by train, sometimes by water way. Among these is also the life for women as well as for men. Card parties, receptions, at-home, dances, are all a part of the social program for visiting guests and more numerous when it possible attempt cultivation, there are theatre parties

Has the Negro woman made any contributions to the general culture of humanity? Has she any higher possibilities besides that of menial work? Ridicule and contempt have characterized the habitual attitude of the American mind toward her higher strivings. The faintest suggestions of her higher possibilities have formerly been received either with a sneer or a smile. But despite traditional theories and centuries of cruel usage there have been more or less continual outcroppings of the Negro woman's suppressed and stunted rank.

Since a large number of Negro women are listed in the highest profession,--that of home-building, it is essential first to note her progress here. Since emancipation she has had a hard struggle in building the home. During the hardships of slavery "quarters" was an adequate term for the place where Negro families resided. But for this term has been substituted the word "home". It has been estimated that a larger percentage of Negroes own their own homes today than of any other element in the American population. Such a possession is an object of pride, and with it has gone the desire to improve not only physical conditions, but also its atmosphere and influence.

"Along with modern conveniences and tasteful furnishings the thinking Negro provides for his family the satisfactions of home life that intelligence and culture demand everywhere. Books, paintings, sculpture, music newspapers, magazines, all are common adjuncts of home life. There is the annual vacation for all the family, sometimes by train, sometimes by motor car. Among them is club life for women as well as for men. Card parties, receptions, at-homes, dances, are all a part of the social programme for visiting guests; and where conditions make it possible without humiliation, there are theatre parties

also, followed by suppers and dances, all of which reflects the genuine Americanism of the Negro. Along with these go literary, scientific, professional and art societies and clubs, whose members have qualified by degrees from recognized American institutions and have achieved distinction in their respective fields. These are the finer flowers of Negro home life."¹

A much larger proportion of Negro families owned homes in 1920 than in 1910. Higher wages during the war made it easier for them to purchase homes, and the prevailing inadequate supply of houses frequently necessitated buying property in order to secure shelter.

On the other hand one cannot overlook the large percentage of Negro families occupying rented apartments. These tenements or apartments create serious social problems. Normally, the homes of Negro families have a margin of space. The old institution of the unused parlor frequently survives, even where there is overcrowding in the sleeping rooms. The necessities of the new urban life, however, are forcing it out. One study of a group of fifty-three families indicated that they were crowded into "unsanitary, dark quarters averaging four and two-sevenths persons per room."¹ In St. Louis, abandoned residential sections of whites provided shelter at an increased rental of 25 per cent. In Pittsburgh, Epstein found that of 318 families 50 percent were living in rooming houses and about 12 per cent were in camps and churches. Kitchens, attics, basements, and dining rooms became sleeping rooms, and in the more crowded sections beds were rented by the double shift basis. These congested conditions were caused by the migration of Negro families from

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Moton, Robert S., What the Negro Thinks, p. 37

²

Pendleton, H. B., The Survey, February 1917

the South to enter fields of industry,

"In 1919, James H. Robinson in Cincinnati, however, found Negro families living in the oldest model tenements in the city, 85 per cent of them fire traps; 1 out of 3 toilets out of repair, and 54 per cent of all the houses without baths. Dr. Bernard J. Newman, Philadelphia, in 1924, found in the old Negro areas a congestion expressed at points in an average of five persons to a room. The outlying areas were less crowded."¹

Because of these deplorable living conditions for Negro families in the United States, the increase in home ownership since 1890 has been steady and noteworthy.

"The homes owned in Beckley, West Virginia, range in value from \$1000 to \$15,000. The value of the average home is \$2,632.50. Thirty-nine and three-tenths per cent of those owning homes own other property. Five per cent of the residents live in rented property. But 22.8 per cent of those living in rented property own property in other cities. Sixty-two and one-half per cent of the five per cent who are living in rented homes rent them from Negro landlords. Thirty-seven and five-tenths per cent of the renters rent from white landlords. The average amount paid by renters was \$17.43."²

In northern cities there has been a rapid increase in home buying, but the dwellings purchased by Negroes have been in a large part old and difficult to keep in repair.

"Woofter and the Chicago Race Commission both found that the migration and consequent scarcity of houses and high rents had led to a marked increase in home ownership among Negroes in the North. Woofter believes that 'since 1920 home ownership among Negroes in northern cities has about doubled' and gives instances of an increasing tendency to buy in New York City, Chicago and Philadelphia. Moreover, there are indications that this is only one phase of a

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Johnson, Charles S., The Negro in American Civilization, p. 208

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A Survey of Negro Housing and Home Ownership of Beckley, West Virginia, made by Professor W. C. Motney of Bluefield Institute, May 1928, under the auspices of the Bureau of Negro Welfare and Statistics, Charleston, West Virginia, J. W. Robinson, Director.

noticeable progress of the Negroes in saving money, opening bank accounts and developing thrift in general."¹

But what effect have these problems of housing conditions had upon Negro woman? It was not until she was free that she had an opportunity to realize the full meaning of home. She had formerly a habitation in the hut of her servitude, but not a home. To her a home was an institution as new as her freedom was novel. Mother and wife had largely been mere names, so far as their influence for practical good to the millions of the enslaved race went. In starting out on her other tasks, the Negro woman had to find the new idea of home, and to begin at the bottom to generate the principles of home life. This achievement, wrought into the texture of Negro life in the South, is not least among the accomplishments of the race. To hundreds of thousands of the race, home now has a meaning, and mother and wife are no longer practical misnomers. Severed families and disrupted homes were common in the traffic of slavery. This destroyed the true sense of security in the attempted home quarters of the Long Ago and individualized Negro woman in such a way as to blot out the idea of home.

The commendable ambition to own land and to have a home of her own is one of the most animated signs of progress. All this progress circles around the single idea of womanhood, for at least the Negro woman is the Negro home. A race which supplements its ambition to attain to learning, to commercial and

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Kennedy, L. V., The Negro Peasant Turns Cityward, P. 167, Chicago Race Commission, The Negro in Chicago.

realty possession, to schools and churches of excellence, with that of building and maintaing a comfortable home is not among the decadent peoples. Measured by ambition along of founding the best homes possible, the social progress of the Negro woman would be regarded as on the upgrade. One observes that a number of homes is annually increasing alike in city and in country.

What can be said of her moral progress not only inside of the home but outside as well? Has her sex status improved since the tragic days of slavery?

"Without a doubt," wrote Du Bois a little over two decades ago, "the point where the Negro American is furtherest behind modern civilization is in his sexual mores."¹

The moral status of the mass was conceded by Du Bois to be low, for he estimated that with one-fourth of their births illegitimate "at least one-half (of the Negroes) are observing the monogamous sex mores."²

About the same time, Odum, as a young student seeking information on the Negro, accepted the following testimony of a physician as an authentic picture of the home life of the Negro.

"In his home life the Negro is filthy, careless, and indecent. He is as destitute of morals as any of the lower animals. He does not know even the meaning of work. Three things are wholly unknown to the Negro--virtue, honesty, and truth. We have a few exceptions to the above rules. Syphilis and tuberculois are his worst enemies. To the latter disease he very easily

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DuBois, W. E. B., The Negro American Family, Atlanta 1908, p.37

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Odum, Howard W., Social and Mental Traits of the Negro; Research into the Conditions of the Negro Race in Southern Towns; a Study in Race Traits, Tendencies and Prospects, New York, 1910, p. 171

succumbs, due to the close and filthy manner of living. They will pen up 4 to 10 in a small room at night, hence very little oxygen. This is my observation from twenty years of professional work in a section where the population is largely Negroes."¹

After Odum had made some investigations himself into Negro communities, and listened to the lewd songs of loafers about southern towns, he reached the conclusions which supported the above estimate of Negro morals.

"The indiscriminate mixings in the home, the utter lack of restraint deadens any moral sensibilities that might be present. Nowhere in the home is there restraint; the contact and conduct of its members belong to the lowest classifications. There is little knowledge of the sanctity of the home or marital relations, consequently little regard for them. The open cohabitation of the sexes related by no ties of marriage is a very common practice; little is thought of it as it relates to the race; there is apparently no conscience in the matter."²

It was during this same period that Pickett, like others who were offering solutions for the "Negro Problem", made the following observations on the family life of Negroes.

"The census returns exhibit a disheartening condition of family life among Negroes. Of course, it is very difficult to obtain accurate statistics upon this subject, but from those presented it is quite apparent that in manner of life, general morality and observance of the obligations of the marital state and the Negro both North and South is greatly lacking. Without going into details upon this subject, we may say that the condition of immorality in life presented by this people is one which adds to the difficulty of any adequate solution of the problem."³

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Ibid, p. 163

2

Ibid, p. 164

3

Pickett, William P., The Negro Problem, A. Lincoln's Solution, New York, 1909, p. 62

The statistics on Negro illegitimacy in the District of Columbia have continued to be one of the main sources of judgments on the morality of the Negro. In 1924, Ellwood was of the opinion that "the moral condition of the Negro shows a demoralization of his family."¹ As recently as 1930, A. H. Shannon in The Negro in Washington concluded from these statistics that "the family functions very imperfectly, if at all, with a very considerable part of Negro womanhood."² Moreover, the high illegitimate birthrate "is one of the manifest measures of the indifferent success achieved on the part of the white, during this long contact in mediating the ideals, the morals of Christianity to the Negro."³

One of Ellwood's students had reached an even more startling conclusion regarding the family morals of the Negro as the result of a survey in 1904 of the Negroes in Columbia, Missouri. The apparent absence of standards of sex behavior among the impoverished and disorganized migrants of this city as well as the tales of gossip mongers seemed to him to indicate "a perilous approach to that state of promiscuity postulated by a certain school of anthropologists as man's most primitive sex condition."⁴ Nevertheless the opinion of this investigator was scarcely more extreme than that of Thomas, a northern-born mulatto, who had his first experiences with the masses of Negroes in the South during

¹ Ellwood, Charles, Sociology and Modern Social Problems (New York, 1924), p. 259

² Shannon, Charles, The Negro in Washington, A Study of Race Amalgamation, New York, 1930, p. 110

³ Ibid p. 111

⁴ Elwang, William Wilson, The Negroes of Columbia Missouri, p. 53

the periods of disorganization following the Civil War. The following excerpt, taken from Thomas's book, which has been widely read since its publication at the beginning of the present century, represents his unqualified conclusion concerning the sex behavior of Negro men and women.

"So lacking in moral rectitude are the men of the Negro race, that we have known them to take strange women into their homes and cohabit with them with the knowledge, but without protest, from their wives and children. So great is their moral putridity that it is no uncommon thing for their stepfathers to have children by their stepdaughters with the consent of the wife and mother of the girl. Nor do other ties of relationship interpose moral barriers, for fathers and daughters, brothers and sisters, oblivious of decent social restrictions, abandon themselves without attempt at self-restraint to sexual gratification whenever desire or opportunity arises... Negro women have but dim notions of the nature and obligations of wifedom for as we have observed, the leading thoughts which actuate them are to be free from parental control, to secure freedom. Nor is a female anti-nuptial knowledge a bar to marriage among Negroes, especially in the alliance of a fair woman to a black man, while illegitimate motherhood is rather a recommendation in the eyes of a prospective husband. Martial immoralities, however, are not confined to the poor, the ignorant and the degraded among the freed eople, but are equally common among those who presume to be educated and refined."¹

Although there has been a rather general agreement among students and other observers of the morals of the American Negro, the difference in viewpoints underlying these observations must be taken into consideration. The opinions of Thomas, who was a product of New England culture, doubtless reflected his revulsion of feeling toward the disorganized Negroes of the South with whom he was identified by custom and public opinion. It

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Thomas, William H., The American Negro. What He Was, What He Is, and What He May Become, (New York), 1901, p. 179

can hardly be denied that the conditions upon which he based his generalizations existed to a certain extent not only at the time when he wrote but have continued to vex those dealing with the Negro. Cases of domestic discord which come daily to the attention of the courts and social agencies give the same picture of family morals among Negroes as that described by Thomas. The following statement of a young Negro woman seeking aid in the Court of Domestic Relations in Chicago in 1929, indicates the extent of the present demoralization of the Negro family among certain sections of the population.

" I am the mother of four children by W---B---. I met him at the place where I roomed. He liked me and started going with me and then began 'fooling' with me and I told him I was pregnant, and I say, 'What are you going to do about it?' He said we will get married, but we didn't. That baby was born dead. Then I got that way again but this baby died with the whooping cough. I have been with him six years this March. He taken my kids and go an' stay with another woman. I went there last night, and she put the burglar chain on and peeped out. I asked her to let me see the kids but she wouldn't let me see my kids. She just closed the door and then opened it again. Then my husband came to the door and run me away. He said, 'get away from here you b---, I will kill you.' So I run down the stairs...We have been having spats but he never did this way before--taking the children. He kept promising me that he was going to marry each time I would get pregnant but he didn't. When I got to the County Hospital to have my babies, I tell lies to save him....This woman is running a disgrace house is why I want to get my children away from there. He bring the children down there, she would keep him and the children and he didn't have to work unless he wanted to...She was picked up and the law told her not to show up down there no more until the first of January."¹

Further study of the conditions in the same city has revealed a steady decline in the illegitimacy rate since 1900. Although Du Bois' characterization of the family life of the Negro was scarcely more favorable than that of other observers, he viewed this condition of the masses as a part of the historical development of the race in America and concluded that

".....there cannot be in the mind of the patient unprejudiced observer any doubt but that the morals, sexual and other, of the American Negro compare favorably today with those of any European peasantry and that a large and growing class is in this respect the equal of the best in the nation."¹

Du Bois' conclusion was essentially in accord with that of Reuter at the present time who holds that "the homes and home life and the sex standards of the middle and upper class Negroes are essentially the same as those of white Americans of similar economic, educational and social strata,"²

E. Franklin Frazier The Negro Family in Chicago cites a case which is typical of the progress of the middle class Negroes.

"A school teacher....came from a family that was representative of the background from which Negroes with family traditions have come. She was born in Augusta, Georgia, and was educated by her parents in one of the larger Negro colleges. Her paternal grandfather who was free, as well as his wife, had been a piano-tuner and had owned his home and other property in the same city. She took pride in the fact that her father, now deceased, was one of the first graduates of a well known Negro college in the South. After finishing college he became a postal clerk. Her mother, the only offspring of a slave

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Du Bois, W. E. B., Morals and Manners Among Negro Americans (Atlanta University Publications), No. 18, 1914, p. 136

2

Reuter, Edward B., The American Race Problem, A Study of The Negro, (New York), 1927.

and a white man who bought her, had taught school for some years after graduating from that same school. Her older brothers and sisters had always helped the younger members of the family to acquire an education and thereby maintain the status of the family. One of her sisters was also a school teacher while one brother was a journalist and another an electrician. She was a member of the Congregational Church located in this area, and belonged to one of the National Greek letter societies."¹

The following excerpt is true of a minority of Negro families of the middle class. The young woman who furnished the history has often come into conflict with upper class Negroes and has espoused radical labor doctrines. Her father was,

"...the outstanding stonemason and bricklayer of the town (Pennsylvania) surpassing even Bill Stompert (white) from whom he 'stole' his trade. On excursions Father would take us to the houses he was building and to the bridges that were in process of construction, and my youngest sister and I would be awestruck with the wonder of it all. Dad would allow us to climb in and about the houses and he would show us how to mix mortar, handle the trowel, etc. I remember how he used to love his tools, and when folks would come to the house to borrow them, we wouldn't let anyone have them.

So it was very early that we acquired a deep and abiding respect for the people of the working class, because we were and are part and parcel of them. We were taught early by both parents to respect personality as it showed itself through constructive labor. The men, mostly white, who worked for Dad, the mechanics as well as the laborers, we thought of as constructive forces in the community. It was probably because of these ideas that we regarded with pride all the male members of the family.

Quite contrary to the custom of the town, our formal entertainment consisted only of our friends. We never entertained 'celebrities' preachers, and visitors for the sake of adding to the family prestige. Because our family on mother's side of the household was very

well known and respected, our relationship with the elite of the white groups was casual and usual. But although we were often in the homes of the most wealthy, Mother took care that our house, which while comfortably furnished, was in keeping with our economic status. It was simple but tastefully furnished. It was quite different from the standards prevailing among our Negro friends, who thought we were queer because we didn't imitate the houses of the wealthy in point of view of appointment. They also thought we were queer because we dressed in gingham and percales and wore flat but well made shoes and lisle stockings. I thought the G-+girls (wealthy white girls) were beautifully dressed, but there never was any envy in this admiration for Mother had always taught us that the important thing was to 'dress within our means' and to look clean and tidy. Even our Sunday clothes were simple and very often I have had to say when I was twitted about my simple clothes by other colored children, 'well, anyway my father is an expert mechanic and yours is nothing but a servant for white people', or 'I am sure I look as well in my gingham as you in your satins.' The statements always ended the arguments.

We had a piano because Mother thought that there should be entertainment in the house, and she believed in the cultural influence of music. Discussions outside of the house between father and his friends who were mainly white mechanics we listened to and I believe my interests in the proletariat was generated in these early years...."¹

¹ Frazier, E. Franklin, The Negro Family in Chicago, 242.

On through the changing forces of masters and the steady undercurrent of powerful economic forces the Negro woman plodded. With the foundation of her economic security stabilized in the gradual improvement of her home and moral status, she fearlessly and courageously turned now to careers and professions. Whereas in the economic and industrial fields she has met limitations, no such discriminations can obtain in careers and professions. For there exists for the most part an open field where merit wins its reward without artificial handicaps.

The first woman to render outstanding service and who proved to be a credit not only to her own race but to the white race as well was Harriet Tubman, a fugitive slave, and one of the most famous of the Underground railroad operators.

"Harriet Tubman escaped from slavery in Maryland about 1849 when between twenty and twenty-five years of age, and at once began to make trips into the South to aid others to escape. In nineteen trips she is said to have led over three hundred fugitives into the Northern States and Canada. She was employed during the Civil War in the secret service of the Federal Army. After the war she founded a home in Auburn, New York, for aged colored persons. She retained much of her vigor until she was over eighty years old. For the two years previous to her death she was cared for by friends and particularly the New York State Federation of Colored Women's Clubs."¹

A noted anti-slavery speaker was Sojourner Truth who was brought to America when a child and was sold as a slave in the State of New York.

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Negro Year Book, An annual encyclopedia of the Negro (1925-26), p. 220.

Monroe N. Work. Reference: Harriet, The Moses of her People, Sarah Bradford, New York, 1897.

"After slavery was abolished in New York in 1827, Sojourner Truth became widely known in the North and was a prominent figure in anti-slavery meetings. Sojourner Truth was noted as a public speaker. She was able to 'bear down an audience by a few simple words.' She was greatly admired by Wendell Phippips, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and other prominent anti-slavery agitations."¹

There seems to be a general impression and a growing sentiment in this country that the colored woman has not and is not making any progress; or that she has not improved the educational opportunities offered her by the philanthropic white people who have proven themselves friendly to the cause of Negro education. This feeling has developed from two causes: first, we have a large and wealthy class of white people who go South every year during the cold season for either their health or pleasure and while in the South, they see a great many colored people on the streets of Southern cities who appear to have no employment. In many cases this may be true; sometimes they are unemployed because they do not want to work; but in the majority of cases the true cause of so much idleness among colored people in the South lies in the fact that they are not able to get work no matter how much they seek it. Let this be as it may, the presence of these people on the streets dressed as the unemployed usually dress in the South, gives these northern white people an unfavorable impression of the colored man and woman and an erroneous idea of the real condition of these colored people. Hence they return to Northern homes with a very pessimistic story to tell regarding the Southern colored people.

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Work, Monroe, Negro Year Book. An annual encyclopedia of the Negro, 1925-26, Tuskegee, Alabama, p. 221

Reference: Narrative Sojourner Truth, Boston, 1850.

A second reason for this erroneous impression regarding the condition of the Negro woman and man as well, lies in the fact that the majority of white people seldom look in the right direction for Negro progress, but are continually drawing their comparisons from the lowest types and judging the whole race by a few who occupy only the lowest levels in common society. For an illustration: a country girl from the South who has never spent six days of her life in a school room is employed in a Northern family to do menial work. The woman of the household finds her ignorant, and sometimes absolutely stupid, and instead of classing this girl where she belongs, as all races are divided into classes, she immediately arrives at a conclusion that because this girl hails from the South, she must be a fair specimen and a true representative of all the colored people in that section. And she further concludes that all this talk about the progress made by the Negro woman since the War is mere talk having no foundation.

Indeed, so general is the impression among other races that no real progress has been made by the ex-slaves, that at least seven out of every ten seem to think of the colored womanhood as a worthless, immoral, inflexible element incapable of mental, moral and spiritual developments essential to a higher state of civilization. This impression concerning the lack of progress of the Negro woman is apparently false when one observes her rapid advance in professions and careers, and private enterprises.

Two outstanding Negro women in private enterprises are Madame C. J. Walker who

".....started her career over a Louisiana washtub and made one of the first Negro fortunes in her anti-kink hair preparations. She lived in state in a spacious summer home in Irvington-On-The-Hudson, and her town house in New York City was for years one of the objects pointed to by the drivers of sight-seeing buses."¹

Another more recent success in beauty preparations is:

"Mrs. Annie M. Turnbo Malone whose Poro products are known throughout Brown America. Due in large part to the stimulus of Madame Walker and Mrs. Malone, Negroes have gone in heavily for the beauty parlor business, serving not only their own race, but in large and increasing numbers white customers as well. It is interesting that at the time when Negro barbers, who once dominated the trade, especially in the South, are being forced out or restricted to work among their own people, Negro women are forging ahead in hair and beauty parlors."²

In private enterprises but in a different trade is still another outstanding Negro woman:

"Mrs. Willie Daniels of Atlanta...has an amazing control of catering to practically all of the fashionable parties of that Southern metropolis. She is an individualist. Her fame has come from her own ability and personality. She is an artist in the preparation and serving of food. But she has not interest in organizing a trade. Everything depends on her. When she stops there is every likelihood that the work of her lifetime will fall asunder and this profitable Negro enterprise will be supplanted by French and Italian caterers."³

During the days of slavery and in the reconstruction period, Negro women were successful as operators of catering businesses. It is in recent years, however, and in connection with beauty culture that Negro women have originated and

¹ Embree, Edwin R., Brown America, p. 161

² Ibid, p. 162

³ Embree, Edwin R., Brown America, p. 162

developed what may be considered as big business enterprises two of the most important of which have already been cited.

After emancipation, however, Northern philanthropists made themselves martyrs in assisting the Negro to establish a new social order. Certain Negro women therefore realizing the terrible barrier of illiteracy became pioneers in the building of institutions for the enlightenment and improvement of their race. Sadie Iola Daniel in her book, Women Builders, presents a few towering personages who have stood like beacons for the masses pointing them to higher things. Of Lucy Craft Laney the author states,

"A feature of the ancient Greek games was the relay race, in which the runner at the end of his lap handed on the lighted torch to his successor. This parable of education is symbolized in the life of Lucy Laney, who for almost half a century has carried the torch handed her by President Ware, the founder of Atlanta University. Haines Normal and Industrial Institute, Augusta, Georgia, a secondary school for Negro boys and girls, was founded by this woman forty-six years ago. It has long been recognized as the best institution of its kind in Georgia."¹

In Jackson Ward a distinctly Negro section of historic Richmond, Virginia, two buildings are pointed out to tourists, namely the Sixth Mount Zion Baptist Church, the institution of John Jasper of "sun-do-move" fame, and the office building of the independent order of St. Luke. Both of these buildings are connected with dynamic personalities--the first representing the work of an individualistic minister of the gospel; the

¹ Daniel, Sadie I., Women Builders, p. 1.

Second, the attainments of a woman with vision and love, Mrs. Maggie Lena Walker. One cannot appreciate the achievements of such a remarkable woman, however, until she enters this one hundred thousand dollar office building and sees fifty men and women at work.

"Blessed are they who hear and heed the call... Maggie Walker heard it, and in twenty-five years a small spiritless company of men and women is converted to a compact army; a dilapidated dwelling house is replaced by a magnificent office building filled with earnest and zealous workers; and the stairway has become almost useless for the elevator has quickened the speed. The pencil has yielded to the typewriter, and the pen to the press. Where once stood a residence now stands a bank, and the once empty treasury, like the widow's oil, is being constantly increased. The once unknown school teacher becomes a national figure; and your Organization is favorably spoken of from East to West. Like Cornelia she by whose energy and tireless efforts most of this was accomplished, may smilingly exclaim, 'These are my jewels,' and rejoice that she heard, and answered the call."¹

Another outstanding pioneer is Janie Porter Barrett.

"In the spring of 1925, Judge Ricks of the Juvenile Court of Richmond, Virginia, in a letter to the president of the board of managers of the Virginia Industrial School for Colored Girls, said: 'Twelve years ago when I came upon the bench, there was no place but the jails for colored girls not amenable to probation. The problem had no solution until this institution came into existence. Mrs. Barrett and her workers are doing such a wonderful work that they are transforming the lives of these girls, teaching them to work and to sew and to do other things necessary in making a home, and sending them back into the communities as useful citizens. I cannot commend too highly the work being done.'"²

Miss Daniel states that the above words were included in an address before two hundred representative people of New York City

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Daniel, Sadie, I., Women Builders, p. 44

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Daniel, Sadie, I., Women Builders, p. 53

at a dinner given six years ago for the launching of the Hampton-Tuskegee drive, the subject of the address being the Virginia Industrial School for Colored Schools for Girls as the life work of a Hampton graduate, Janie Porter Barrett.

Still another splendid Negro leader is Mary McLeod Bethune, founder of the Bethune-Cookman College, Daytona Beach, Florida. Mrs. Bethune has given her life and service to the development of this school, and she has trained many girls physically, mentally and spiritually. In less than two decades the school had so demonstrated its worth that it had become known throughout the State and was attracting national attention. Men of national prominence became affiliated with it through serving on its board of trustees. In July 1923, this school came under the auspices of the Board of Education of the Methodist Episcopal Church, thereupon becoming coeducational. Although this college is affiliated with the Methodist Episcopal Church, it remains non-sectarian and is largely dependent upon the efforts of the president, Mary McLeod Bethune to raise funds for current expenses.

Bethune-Cookman College aims to supply, as far as possible, the immediate needs of the race and community as they confront the Negro here and now, not merely in a high grade academic instruction but in producing efficient teachers for the state at large. It strives to produce greater industrial efficiency for the major portion who must continue to earn their bread by the

labor of their hands. This institution endeavors to aid the masses in getting a finer conception of home life both in material comforts and in spiritual atmosphere. It tries to promote public health and safety, to encourage pride of race, community, and nation, to inculcate a broader appreciation of intellectuality.

Mrs. Bethune has always been alert not only in sensing needs but in meeting them. In 1928, Wilberforce University conferred the honorary degree of Master of Arts upon her. In 1931, her name appeared in the list of American's fifty most illustrious women of today as selected by Ida Tarbell.

"May the youths that she touches be so inspired by her noble service that they will strive to emulate her example by living not for what they can enjoy, but for what they can achieve; not for self but for others."¹

Nannie Helen Burroughs is indeed a credit to the Negro race. She was born in Orange, Virginia, May 2, 1883. She was a devoted church member and was asked to talk at various kinds of religious gatherings. Miss Burroughs, however, deemed talk without action useless. To use her own words,

"What's the sense of talk if you don't do something, You talk and people get stirred up and think they'd like to do something, and that makes them feel good; and they go off happy and satisfied, feeling as though they're some account in the world because they've felt like doing something and they haven't done one thing to help one soul alive. If you're going to be a Christian you've got to do something week-ends as well as talk and feel about it Sundays."²

¹ Daniels, Sadie I., Women Builders, p. 106

² Daniels, Sadie I., Women Builders, p. 110

She organized therefore a Woman's Industrial Club and conducted evening classes in bookkeeping, shorthand, type-writing, millinery, cooking, sewing and handicrafts. Each member of the Industrial Club paid ten cents weekly and Miss Burroughs managed the rest. Later she found a school for girls which she called the School of the Three B's--the Bible, the Bath, the Broom--emblems of clean lives, clean bodies, and clean homes. The girls were taught how to live and how to apply what they learned to self-improvement and to the elevation of their environment; in other words, to carry out the school's motto "Wherever you live make that place better." The school later became well known as the "National Training School". Miss Burroughs is an active member of the National Association of Colored Women and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored people. This public servant optimistically contends that in spite of unpromising signs here and there a new civilization is in the making.

It was Emerson who said, "If a man preaches a better sermon, makes a better speech or builds a better mouse-trap than his neighbor though he lives in the woods, the world will make a beaten path to his door." Well might this have been said of Charlotte Hawkins Brown, founder and principal of the Palmer Memorial Institute, at Sedalia, North Carolina. Although Miss Brown was reared and educated in Cambridge, Massachusetts, she was born in Henderson, North Carolina, June 11, 1882. As a student in high school she earned extra money by doing crayon

portraits for her many friends. By incident she became acquainted with Mrs. Alice Freeman Palmer who later aided her financially during her student days at Salem State Normal School. Through the aid of the American Missionary Association she was offered a position prior to her graduation. She went to North Carolina to teach in a small mission school. Through hardships, and prayers the one building mission school developed in several fine equipped buildings to be supported financially by a few substantial white leaders. Miss Brown has been especially active in North Carolina and has received National recognition. As president of the Federation of Women's Clubs of North Carolina, she has been able to lead the women in a concerted drive for the establishment of an Industrial Home for delinquent Negro girls. This plant, now valued at more than \$25,000 has been one of the pieces of work in North Carolina in which white and Negro women have joined heartily.

Mrs. Brown's services are frequently in demand. She has lectured in some thirty-five States of the Union and has been appointed the regular lecturer on interracial subjects at Mount Holyoke, Smith and Wellesley Colleges. She was one of the seven educators honored by the Board of Education of North Carolina in its "Hall of Fame" at the Sesqui-Centennial in Philadelphia in 1926. In 1928, she was elected a member of the Twentieth Century Club of Boston. This club includes in its membership only persons who have achieved distinction in religion, education, art, or science. In 1930 she was elected as one of the

one hundred and fifty delegates to represent the Council of Congregational Churches in America at the Conference at Bournemouth, England.

Last but not least of the pioneer leaders is Jane Edna Hunter. In regards to her call to service she says,

"The solemn thought that I wanted to do something weighed heavily on me.....I walked the floor and begged God to show me what He wanted me to do. I wanted Him to take me and use me in the way He saw fit. I saw the need of an institution to house and protect colored women who come to town as strangers. I saw the need for training and guidance in solving the problems of their daily life. Three weeks from this day, on November 11, 1911, I called the first meeting to organize a Working Girls' Home Association; and for one year and six months the struggle to bring this work into existence was tremendous as well as dramatic."¹

This organization grew and developed. It was later called "The Phillis Wheatley Association", Cleveland, Ohio. Under the guidance and supervision of Miss Hunter, this institution assisted the employment and placement of girls and women, and the organization of clubs for girls.

"In 1924, the Phillis Wheatley Association gave 27,427 night's lodging to 1,201 girls in Cleveland; found employment for 7,239; enrolled 7,815 in cooking, sewing, gymnastic and study classes, and served 46,170 meals in the dining room and cafeteria. At the Doan Branch playground, the attendance was 12,072. In the neighborhood of the Phillis Wheatley Association building 4,124 visits were made by members of the staff."²

It would have been impossible for Jane Hunter to have developed a plant of such magnitude if she herself had not grown. During these 18 years, she has taken six week's courses at the

¹
Daniels, Sadie I., Women Builders, p. 172

²
Daniels, Sadie I., Women Builders, p. 177

National Board of the Young Women's Christian Association, New York City; she has attended night school in Western Reserve University. She studied law for four years and was admitted to the bar in 1925. Her legal training is of invaluable service to the Phillis Wheatley Association and its constituents.

Jane Hunter has dedicated her life to unselfish service in the elevation of colored girls and women as a tribute to her mother and grandmother.

Turning to the other fields to note the progress of the Negro woman we discover Lillian A. Clark[#], a medical doctor. Miss Clark graduated from the Womens Medical College of Philadelphia. She was awarded the anatomy prize for an average of 97 percent. In her senior year she was secretary to her class and is reported to be the only colored woman to receive a diploma from the National Board of Medical Examiners.

May E. Chin[#] received the Degree of Doctor of Medicine from New York University and Bellevue Medical School in 1926. She turned a two-year internship at Harlem Hospital as the first woman to serve that capacity, and as the first Negro woman to finish Bellevue Medical School.

Ruth E. Temple[#], M. D. is on the staff of the maternity division of the Los Angelus City Health Board and also of the White Memorial Hospital. Her practice is limited exclusively to obstetrics and gynecology.

There is a marked increase in the number of Negro women lawyers. The 1920 census reported four women lawyers in the

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Work, Monroe, The Negro Year Book, (1931-32), p. 180

United States. In the five years, 1925-29, twenty Negro women are reported as having graduated from law schools in the country. Twelve of these have been admitted to the bar. Mrs. Ruth Whitehead Whaley, the first Negro woman to be graduated from Fordham University law school set another precedent when she appeared as the first Negro woman attorney to plead before the New York Court of Appeals. Mrs. Clara Burril Buce, a graduate of the Boston University Law School, was reported to be the second Negro woman to be admitted to the Massachusetts bar. Mrs. Sadie T. Mossell Alexander, graduated from the University of Pennsylvania Law School and is reported to be the first Negro woman to win this distinction. She received the Ph.D. degree from the University of Pennsylvania in 1921. Mrs. Violette N. Anderson, of Chicago, was admitted to practise before the Supreme Court of the United States on a certificate showing that she had practised for more than three years before the Illinois Supreme Court. She is said to be the first woman to be admitted to practise before the United States Supreme Court.

Negro women have entered the teaching professions in great numbers. Of the thousands engaged in this profession today are a few towering personages who have stood like beacons for the masses pointing them to higher things, we see Julia C. Jackson is principal of the Teacher Training and Industrial Institute, Athens, Georgia; Estelle Ancrum Forster, principal of the Ancrum School of Music, Boston, Massachusetts; and Cabaniss Saunders, executive secretary of the Young Women's Christian Association in

New York City, whose successful Administration has brought to the support of the work benefactors who have so financed it that from a meager beginning it has developed into one of the most magnificent plants of its kind in the United States. To this class engaged in teaching Negro women how to meet the demands of the changing status of the American home belong Sue W. Brown, chairman of the trustee board of the Iowa Federation Home in Iowa City, and Willa Gertrude Brown, head resident of the Phillis Wheatley House, Minneapolis.

The first Negro woman to become prominent in the field of music (in 1857) was Elizabeth Taylor Greenfield[#] better known as "The Black Swan". She was born in Mississippi, was taken to Philadelphia where she received her education. She attracted much attention both in England and America and was frequently compared with Jenny Lind, who was at that time at the height of her fame.

The next person of color to gain international fame as a singer was Madame Marie Selika of Chicago who visited Europe and achieved great success. Equally prominent was Madame Sisseretta Jones called "Black Patti" who in 1890 sung with great success in the principle cities in Europe, and in recent years formed her own company known as "The Black Patt Troubadours" at the head of which she appeared in every important city of the United States. Other singers of prominence today are Marian Anderson, Philadelphia contralto; Anita Page Brown and others too numerous to mention here.

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Work, Monroe, The Negro Year Book, p. 447.

The first Negro woman poet was Phillis Wheatley born December 5, 1784. She was the first woman black or white to attain literary distinction in this country.

"She was brought when a child to this country in 1761 and sold to John Wheatley of Boston. He had her educated. While yet a child she began to write verses. In 1773 with the endorsement of several distinguished men, her verses were published in London under the title of "Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral, by Phillis Wheatley, Negro Servant of Mr. John Wheatley, of Boston in England." She addressed a poem to General Washington which seemed to have pleased, for in a letter to Joseph Reed dated 1776, he made reference to this poem."¹

Other poets of recent years are Anne Spencer, Alice Dunbar Nelson and a few others.

Two women of the race who have achieved some distinction as sculptors are Edmonia Lewis[#] and Mrs. Fuller.[#] The former was born in New York in 1845 and first attracted notice by exhibition in 1865, in Boston of a bust of Robert Gould Shaw. That same year she went to Rome where she has since continued to reside. Here most noted works are: "The Death of Cleopatra", "The Marriage of Hiawatha", and "The Freed Woman." The latter was born in Framingham, Massachusetts, and is the most noted sculptor of the Negro race in America at the present time.

"She first attracted attention to her work in clay in the Pennsylvania School of Industrial Arts. In 1899, she went to Paris to study where she attracted the attention of Rodin, the great French sculptor. In 1903, she exhibited in the Paris Saloon, a group entitled, "The Wretched." This is considered her masterpiece."²

¹ Work, Monroe, The Negro Year Book (1931-32), p. 458

² Ibid, p. 453.

Other women of note in this field are: Mrs. May Howard Jackson, and Augusta Savage who are achieving much distinction as a result of their work.

Another profession which is practically new to the Negro woman is that of social work. The modern idea of social work among Negroes is less than twenty years old. In 1906, there was organized the National League for the Protection of Colored Women, which sought to do Travelers' Aid Work among colored girls and women who were arriving in New York City principally by coastwise steamers seeking employment and better living conditions. The National League for the protection of Colored women had branches in Philadelphia under the leadership of Mrs. S. W. Layten and in Baltimore and in Norfolk where travelers' aid was the principal function.

The White Rose Home for Colored Working Girls, organized in 1900 by Mrs. Victoria Earle Matthews, antedated this movement by six years. Prior to the opening of this institution Mrs. Matthews had with great sacrifice and unselfish devotion conducted volunteer travelers' aid societies in conjunction with colored women's club work.

The first colored woman to be employed as a professional family case worker was Miss Jessie Sleet (now Mrs. J. R. Scales) a trained nurse who was taken on as a case worker in the New York Charity Organization in 1902 by Dr. E. T. Devine, then Secretary of the Charity Organization Society. Thus it seems that Dr. Devine was the first white social worker executive

to realize the value of using competent, trained Negro social workers for work among their own people, whose problems they could understand and whose needs they could well interpret.

Of course, social work, as commonly understood has been done among Negroes throughout most of the period of the Negro's life in America. As early as 1793, Catherine (Katy) Ferguson, a colored woman, organized in New York City the first Sunday School in America. During her life she reared and placed in suitable homes forty-eight children, twenty of whom were white. Possibly "Katy" Ferguson had no institution to which she could send these helpless little ones, but at least she saw the advantages of the "placing out" system over that of institutional care.

"There are probably as many as 1,500 Negroes in America today who are doing more kinds of social work, although possibly not more than 500 who have received any special training in this field. The majority of the social agencies today, however, are demanding not only that their workers be equipped with a college training or its equivalent, but that some special training also be secured in the profession."¹

It seems evident that effective social case work among Negroes will tend to raise the level of intelligence of physical vigor and industrial status of the group. It will help to produce a hearty race, a self contained group, a resourceful people from whom will emerge outstanding characters whose special contributions to the welfare of man will tend to bring more respect for and more confidence in the Negro as a people.

1

Jone, Eugene Knickle, Social Work Among Negroes, Article, 287
Published 1932.

CONCLUSION

Attempts have been made in the first chapters of this study to present a truthful picture of the Negro woman during the slave period. This picture attempts to show the type of environment in which she lived and the influence that environment played upon her character. It further attempts to show that she was the victim of a religious superstition against which she was defenseless.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSION

After examining the second picture of the Negro woman in the industrial revolution she was courageously competing with women of other races in spite of the ridiculously long hours and pitifully low wages. She was doing this in the industrial field, but also in the home--that of learning to be a skilled workman and that of supporting and rearing a family. Finally when her economic position had been established the next picture of the Negro woman revealed efforts toward improving her own condition and along with that, her moral status. After examining the opinions of various statesmen as to her moral status, and comparing it with the actual improvement of her own condition, one cannot help but conclude that there is no such thing as "innate" desire to be immoral for he who has been brought up in the objective world? The profound influence environment has had upon the Negro woman must be taken into account far more than her hereditary traits, her environment creates desires, changing the existence of "innate" desires, does. Authorities have admitted the

CONCLUSION

Attempts have been made in the first chapters of this study to present a truthful picture of the Negro woman during the slave period. This picture endeavored to show the type of environment in which she lived and the influence that environment played upon her character. It further attempts to show that she was the victim of a helpless debasement against which she was defenseless.

After emancipation the second picture of the Negro woman was in the industrial world, where she was courageously competing with women of other races in spite of the ridiculously long hours and pitifully low wages. Her task here was double not only in the industrial field, but also in the home--that of learning to be a skilled workman and that of supporting and rearing a family. Finally when her economic security had been established the next picture of the Negro woman revealed efforts toward improving her home conditions and along with that, her moral status. After examining the opinions of various observers as to her moral status, and comparing it with the actual improvement of her home conditions, one cannot help but conclude that there is no such thing as "innate" desire to be immoral; for do not those desires spring from the objective world? The profound influence environment has had upon the Negro woman must be taken into account far more than her hereditary traits. For environment creates desires. Assuming the existence of "innate" desires, some authorities have admitted the

exceptional chastity of the Negro woman in her African background. Hence transplanted to a favorable environment one observed the improvement of her home and home conditions and the improvement of her moral status.

With her economic welfare established, this study attempted to show a third picture of the Negro woman and her progress in careers and professions.

In view of her handicaps, her difficulties, and her problems can one deny the fact that she has developed and progressed; that she has made vast strides toward the improvement of not only herself but of her surroundings, conditions, and others with whom she has come in contact?

Although it is the opinion of many writers today that the Christian religion has been an "opiate" of the Negro, many Negro women pioneers have proved this to be a false theory by attributing their success to their profound faith in God. It is my firm belief that the future success of the Negro woman will depend to a large extent upon her attitude toward the Christian religion, especially as expressed in prayer life.

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